

Chapter 3

Selecting a School

Choosing a school without considering whether it fits your needs is like buying an airline ticket, boarding the plane and taking off — without knowing your destination. You have to do some comparison shopping to decide which school is right for you.



The variety of college options means almost any student can find the right school. Kentucky has more than 80 colleges and trade schools, many of them with branch campuses. Tuition, required fees and books for full-time attendance range from about \$3,800 at community and technical colleges to \$22,600 at private colleges each school year. Other costs depend on whether you live on campus or have a long commute to the campus.

Schools must make costs available in writing if you ask. But you have to check the quality of the school and its educational program. Don't be afraid to ask questions, because reputable schools understand your cautious attitude and will gladly explain their programs and policies. You'll invest a great deal of time and money in your education, so it's well worth the effort to get the information you need to make wise decisions.

The School Evaluation chart on page 24 may help you select a school. Some of the answers to the questions in the evaluation are provided in Part III, which has information about most of Kentucky's colleges and trade schools. If you don't find the answers to your questions, contact the school.

Points to Consider

As an adult, you may want to find out if the school(s) you're considering can provide you with information about:

- Child care.
- Evening and weekend classes.
- Tutoring.
- Transportation.
- Payment options.
- Percentage of nontraditional students.
- Academic programs (majors).
- Accommodations for a disability.
- Housing on or off campus.
- Distance learning.
- Credit for courses completed at another school.
- Transfer of courses to another school where you plan to enroll in the future.
- Graduation and job placement rates.
- Credit by exam.
- Credit for Armed Forces courses.
- Credit for life and/or work experiences.
- Credit for courses sponsored by business, industry and government.
- Availability of support services and counseling.
- Tuition-free classes for senior citizens.
- Minimum campus time required to complete program of study.

Steps to help you select a school

- ◆ Visit the school's website. Website addresses are provided on the school pages beginning on page 94.
- ◆ Request and read the school's catalog.
- ◆ Visit the campus.
- ◆ Talk with former students.
- ◆ If the distance to classes is a problem, does the school offer correspondence or online courses?

Types of Schools

You have several types of schools to consider. The types of schools vary depending on the kind and level of education or training provided.

Public Universities

If you consider variety a plus, you might want to consider a state university. Your choices of career tracks and courses are greatest at one of these schools. All offer four-year degrees, and some offer associate degrees, advanced degrees and preprofessional and professional studies.

If you don't mind having some large classes, this might be just the thing for you.

Your social opportunities are usually greater too. From sororities/fraternities and clubs to major sporting events, the choices are numerous.

Private Colleges

If you like smaller classes and faculty availability, you might consider one of Kentucky's private universities and colleges. These schools may also offer associate and advanced degrees, as well as four-year degrees.

They usually cost more, but don't let that turn you away. Financial aid is available.

Because there aren't as many people on campus, you might have more opportunities to participate in sports, music groups and other activities.

Public Two-Year College

You may want to start your education at one of Kentucky's two-year colleges. You can follow several paths here. One leads to an associate's degree that prepares you for finishing a bachelor's degree. Other paths lead to certificates, diplomas and degrees that prepare you for entering the workforce. These can take from six months to two years to complete.

A big advantage of going this route is that you can usually find a two-year school near you.



Trade Schools

Interested in cosmetology or a fast track to becoming a nurse? This might be the route for you.

Trade schools — also called proprietary schools — are privately owned and licensed, offering courses in business, trade, technical, industrial or related areas. Some schools offer only one area of study, while others offer a variety of courses.

Off-Campus Courses

If you can't take classes on campus, you have several other options. Online courses offered through the Kentucky Virtual University (KYVU) and the Southern Regional Electronic Campus are two possibilities. For more information on KYVU and Electronic Campus, see page 23. KET offers college credit telecourses. For more information, call 800.432.0970 or visit www.ket.org/ telecourses. Distance learning courses are offered through correspondence, CDs, interactive satellite and the Internet. Contact the college for information.

If you don't live near a college or university, some schools offer extended campus centers. These are classes at locations other than the main campus. Contact the college admissions office for information.

Transfers Between Public Schools

If you plan to start college at one public school and transfer to another, you should use the Kentucky transfer tools to help you transfer your course work more easily.

If you're just starting college or are returning to college and haven't decided on a major, check out the **General Education Transfer Policy**. With proper planning, you can transfer general education credits to any public university in Kentucky — without losing credits.

If you've picked your area of study, a **transfer framework** may be right for you. These frameworks guarantee that at least 60 hours of course work will transfer to any public university in Kentucky that offers your chosen degree.

Some schools have special transfer arrangements that let students who complete an associate degree transfer credits to a bachelor's degree program at a public university in Kentucky. Options are available for all students, so check with a college advisor to find out what works for you.

To plan your college course work and make sure you're taking the right courses, check out the **Course Applicability Systems (CAS)**. This online course planning system is available to all students, anytime, anywhere. Log on to ky.transfer.org/cas/index.jsp to begin planning what classes to take and see how your course work will transfer.

You should also consult college catalogs and your advisor to learn more about what's required for the major you're planning to pursue. For more information about transfer tools, contact **Deborah Jackson, Council on Postsecondary Education, 1024 Capital Center Drive, Frankfort, KY 40601; call 502.573.1555; or e-mail deborah.jackson@mail.state.ky.us**.



Online Learning

You can earn certificates and associate, bachelor's and master's degrees online through the **Kentucky Virtual University (KYVU)**, the state's official virtual campus. The courses and programs are offered by schools in Kentucky and other states. Once enrolled, you access courses by logging on to www.kyvu.org. If you register through KYVU, you'll be billed and make payments to the school that offers those courses. You'll receive your certificate or degree from the school that offers the program. KYVU offers online registration; technical support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; and a call center with evening and Sunday hours.

For more information about KYVU and an up-to-date list of programs contact the Call Center toll-free at 877.740.4357

The Kentucky Virtual Library (KYVL) is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and offers full-text online periodicals and electronic databases. If you have a library card from a Kentucky library, you can access KYVL's databases. For more information, visit www.kyvl.org.

If the program you're looking for isn't available from KYVU, it may be offered through the **Southern Regional Electronic Campus**. The Electronic Campus is a service of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), of which Kentucky is a member.

Federal rules governing financial aid for distance education have been changing to reflect the growing acceptance and availability of distance education, especially online classes. Check with the financial aid office at the school from which you're taking classes to see what financial aid sources are available. For more information about the Electronic Campus and an up-to-date list of programs, visit www.electroniccampus.org. For more information about the Southern Regional Education Board, visit www.sreb.org.

School Evaluation

			Instructions: If you're considering more than three schools, photocopy this page before proceeding. Select the schools for evaluation and write their names on the slanted lines. Answer the questions for each school. (If the answer is "yes," make a "✓" in the column. If the answer is "no," make an "X" in the column.) What are your findings?
			Does the school offer the educational program you want?
			If you're admitted to the school, are you also admitted into the educational program you want?
			Is the school accredited by an agency accepted by the U.S. Department of Education (e.g., Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Council on Occupational Education, Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology, National Accrediting Commission of Cosmetology Arts and Sciences, American Association of Bible Colleges)?
			Is the school licensed or approved by the appropriate state government agency (e.g., Council on Postsecondary Education, State Board for Proprietary Education, State Board of Hairdressers and Cosmetologists, State Board of Barbering, Kentucky Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors)?
			Is the school approved for federal and state financial aid programs?
			Does the school have the resources to provide you the education you need to be successful in the work force? Look for up-to-date training devices, developmental course work and/or tutorial assistance, general education courses (e.g., English and math), educational qualifications of the faculty, and library holdings and resources related to your field of study.
			Will completion of the educational program qualify you for a job? An exam and/or apprenticeship may also be required. If a licensing examination is required for employment in your career field (e.g., nursing, cosmetology, or law), do a high percentage of the school's graduates pass the exam?
			Does the school have a job placement program? Is it free? Are a high percentage of graduates placed in jobs? Recent graduates and potential employers can help you answer these questions. A good school will give you a list of contacts.
			Does the typical starting salary for a new graduate of the school's educational program compare favorably with that of graduates from the same educational program at other schools? Does it meet with your expectation? If the school provides such data, ask to see detailed statistics substantiating the school's claim.
			Does the enrollment contract (if required) clearly indicate the complete cost of your course of study? Are all necessities (books, room and board, transportation, tools, uniforms, etc.) included in the cost? Schools must make printed cost-of-education information readily available to prospective students upon request.
			Does the enrollment contract contain language to protect you if the school closes or discontinues your program? Call the Better Business Bureau in the area to find out if the school has had problems.
			Does the school have a printed refund policy? Good schools have a reasonable refund arrangement for students who withdraw from school.
			Does the school have a low withdrawal rate? A high rate may be a warning sign.
			Will credits earned at one school be acceptable for transfer to another? If you plan to enter one postsecondary institution but transfer to another institution later, will your credits transfer?
			Does the school have a low student loan default rate? Call the U.S. Department of Education at 800.433.3243 to check a school's default rate. A high default rate may be a warning sign.